

HISTORY AND CIVICS.—These subjects in many schools are taught with enthusiasm and success, the knowledge shown of the latter being creditable to all concerned. Where, however, the historical reading-book has become a substitute for rather than an aid to teaching, results have been the reverse of favourable. The remarks in a preceding paragraph having reference to the use of Geographical Readers apply with even greater force to history, for the matters of human interest dealt with and the lessons to be learnt therefrom lose much of their force and value if unaccompanied by personal explanation and comment. It is voice, manner, and power of exposition which make of history a real living subject, and impress its lessons, whether of warning or encouragement.

DRAWING.—In no subject has the attitude of educationists experienced a greater change of late years than in this. The old freehand "line copy" and geometrical model are fast disappearing, and pupils are set to study the real object. The old plan of the teacher acting the part of director of operations by calling attention to peculiarities of structure and proportion, warning against pitfalls, and showing how difficulties can best be met, has given place to the more rational plan of allowing pupils, under guidance, to observe and find out for themselves, and hence of fostering habits of accuracy and self-reliance. Many teachers, under the able assistance of our art instructors, have realized the importance of the change, and have been successful in modifying their methods so as to harmonize with recent developments. There are still an appreciable number of schools where the old "line copy" plays an altogether too ambitious part, and where the possibilities of correlation fail to receive the attention they deserve. The natural object should be used in all stages of school-work, and the choice of subject should be influenced, as far as possible, by beauty of form and colour. The natural object, too, when modified into conventional forms, will supply material for design, the evolution of which should form an interesting and important branch of the subject under review. The success attending the efforts of so many of our schools in this matter should act as an incentive to those who are still on the old beaten track to break away from obsolete traditions and discover some of the possibilities underlying newer and more approved methods.

NATURE-STUDY.—Amongst the most popular subjects on the syllabus is nature-study, pupils and teachers deriving much pleasure and not a little profit from the investigation and experiment to which it so readily lends itself. Its value as a means of education and its possibilities in supplying a common fund from which other school subjects can draw are gradually being appreciated as they deserve, so that much of the work is characterized by thoughtful and efficient treatment. The last few years have brought home to the great majority of teachers the necessity of distinguishing between lessons of information and those whose objective is mainly or purely an appeal to faculties of observation. The development of intelligence is an outcome of each type of lesson, so that each has its utility value, and must be provided for in any comprehensive and approved scheme of instruction. The information lesson, however, is better suited for the more mature mind, and hence should tend to reach its climax in the higher classes. In the lower classes the main object of nature-study is, by arousing interest, to stimulate the observant faculties and gradually to encourage pupils to utilize their reasoning-powers in reaching simple conclusions, and incidentally to acquire facility and clearness in expressing their thoughts. Much of the work now undertaken in the preparatory classes is too formal, and for this reason largely fails to foster independence of thought and expression as it should. It is not unusual to find the structure of a flower studied with some fullness in these classes; occasionally the function is similarly treated. We cannot commend this selection of subject, for quite apart from the difficulty, not to say irksomeness, which little children must experience in remembering long and unfamiliar terms, the processes involved and questions discussed are beyond the intelligence-level of this stage of school life. Moreover, the pupils are almost entirely dependent on the teacher for the information supplied, and have but little opportunity for the exercise of independent observation, with the result that self-activity is checked and the free play of thought and imagination discouraged. In the preparatory classes lessons should consist mainly of informal talks on subjects within the knowledge-range of class-units, and formal teaching for the most part should be deferred until pupils reach Standard I. In the earlier standard-groups the courses, in the case of country schools, should lead up to the work of gardening, or whatever branch of rural or elementary science it is proposed to study.

SCHOOL GARDENS.—Closely connected with nature study is the school garden, now recognized as a necessary adjunct to primary education in all progressive communities where prosperity depends largely on the products of the soil. Some of the schools have already made a beginning in this direction, and possess well-cultivated and well-stocked plots, which cannot fail to be a source of pleasure and profit to all concerned. We hope to see very pronounced advance in this branch of school-work in the near future, consequent upon the recognition of its importance, as also upon the Board's action in appointing an Instructor in Rural Science, whose services will be available for the training of teachers, and for giving assistance and advice in the matter of preparing and setting out garden plots and in the preparation of suitable courses. The difficulties inseparable from the lot of the sole-charge teacher may prevent the lower-grade school from being credited with any large number of gardens, but all other schools in country districts, we have confidence, will make a determined effort, where circumstances are favourable, to give effect to the wishes of the Board and to the demands of modern progress in taking up a course of elementary horticulture. We would remind teachers of a circular on gardening forwarded to them towards the close of last year, in which the Board signified its intention of offering prizes to those schools which obtained the most satisfactory results in making the school garden a means of practical education.

HEALTH.—Some of our teachers still insist on giving instruction in detailed physiology of a more or less advanced character, whereas the syllabus intends merely that pupils shall acquire